

## [Opinion](#)

Published: Thursday, September 23, 2010

# Editorial: Townships should approve police levies

In 2001, the combined population of Concord, Painesville and Perry townships was 42,573, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates. In 2009, the bureau estimated that the combined population had risen to 45,278 — and some observers feel that may be selling those eastern Lake County communities short.

Then consider that the entity charged with providing police protection to those communities — the Lake County Sheriff's Office — has been forced to make cuts in recent years due to budget restraints, Sheriff Daniel Dunlap has said.

That combination of more residents and fewer resources is just one of several factors that led those townships to place levies on the November ballot that, if passed, would help fund continued police protection from the sheriff's office — in the face of additional budget cuts.

Concord Township will have a 1-mill levy on the ballot. It would cost property owners \$30.63 annually per \$100,000 valuation, and it would raise \$615,929 for the sheriff's office. Painesville Township and Perry Township both have 0.8-mill levies on the ballot, which would cost \$24.50 annually per \$100,000 valuation. The levies would generate \$190,416 from Painesville Township and \$134,915 from Perry Township per year, and each would begin in 2011.

With a recessionary economy that's lingered for years, the sheriff's office has already made cuts by closing the minimum security jail in Painesville Township, closing one of the entrances to Lake County Common Pleas Court, renegotiating with unions to accept six unpaid holidays, furloughs or some combination thereof, and laying off 24 employees.

Dunlap has been warned that his budget will likely be cut another 5 percent or 6 percent this year, he said. That would mean another \$500,000 or so he would need to cut from the budget, likely forcing Dunlap to lay off more deputies from his road patrol when there are already three fewer road deputies than two years ago, he said.

His budget is at the same level it was in 2006 despite the rising cost of materials, and additional cuts would affect the quality of life for those in the communities his office polices.

The sheriff noted that his deputy-to-resident ratio is already smaller than several surrounding communities. He said that the sheriff's office averages one deputy for every 1,216 residents. Comparatively, Mentor has about one officer for every 634 residents and Willoughby and

Painesville have about one for every 500, he said.

We realize that these economic times have been — and will continue to be, for the foreseeable future — tough on taxpayers. But considering that the sheriff's office's budget faces additional cuts in the near future, and considering the estimated — as well as anticipated — population growth of those townships, we feel these levies are the most reasonable solution for those residents who wish to maintain the level of service they currently receive.

We also feel that the prudent way in which Dunlap has managed his budget through these tough economic times should give voters confidence that these funds would be used appropriately, and we feel that approving the levies is economical in the sense that it would mean none of the affected townships would have to consider investing millions of dollars more to start from scratch their own police departments.

Thus, we support the passage of all three levies and encourage voters to approve them on Nov. 2.